

Support Raised Bill 6262: Written Testimony submitted to the CGA Environment Committee Public Hearing- Monday March 7 2011.

Submitted By: Peter M. Orr, Fort Hill Farms, LLC, Thompson CT
Member: The Farmer's Cow, Very Alive, CFBA Dairy Committee, CT Milk Promotion Board

Please support House Bill 6262 – An Act Concerning the Community Investment Account (CIA). A core goal of this bill should be to remove the sunset provisions that would end the Agricultural Sustainability Grants to dairy farms by the Community Investment Account. CT Dairy Farms continue to be under financial stress similar to conditions for when the Agricultural Sustainability Grants were originally put into the CIA. Unfortunately, the conditions have not changed and no progress has been made with Federal Milk policy and pricing reform. Currently, federal milk pricing formulas do not account for the cost of producing milk in CT. It should be pointed out that the CIA trigger formula contained within the current CIA does not produce a payment when the cost of production is below what a dairy farm receives for the price of milk. So therefore, the CIA formula triggers a payment only when needed and does not trigger when a payment is not financially justified by the formula. In other words, the dairy safety net only pays out when needed and should not be viewed as an open-ended unregulated payment. The Agricultural Sustainability Grants only pay out when the need arises and I would respectfully request that this dairy safety net be allowed to remain in place as there is a sound fair financial basis underlying it. Please remove the CIA sunset provisions.

In today's world, it's all about jobs and economic impact. By official studies from University of Connecticut, CT Agriculture is a 3.5 Billion dollar industry with 20,000 jobs. CT Dairy is over 1 Billion Dollars of this economic value to CT as well as several thousand jobs. CT Dairy provides the infrastructure for the overall Agricultural economic engine in CT as well as the primary place-holder of the CT Agricultural land base for which there are long-term investments being made through land preservation efforts. In addition, CT Dairy Farms contribute substantial environmental ecosystem services to our state. All of these contributions by CT Dairy farms to the State Of Connecticut can continue by simply removing the sunset provisions of the CIA and allow the Agricultural Sustainability Grants be made by the fair formulas contained with it. There is considerable leverage of the return on investment for the CIA Agricultural Sustainability Grants to CT Dairy Farms. One can view these grants as stimulus payments for a great opportunity to grow agriculture in the future for the State of Connecticut and its economy!

The Community Investment Account funds the Agricultural Viability Grant program, the Farm Transition program, the CT Grown program, the Farmlink program, the CT Farmland Preservation program as well as the Agricultural Sustainability Grants to CT Dairy Farms. I request your support in continuing this funding for all these programs as it is a great package of opportunity to grow Agriculture and thereby the economy for Connecticut.

Respectfully Submitted, Peter M. Orr, Thompson CT, 06277

My name is Ned Ellis from Hebron CT. My family has been in Hebron since the 1700's. I operate Mapleleaf Farm with 230 milking cows and 220 replacement heifers. We grow 275 acres of corn and 150 acres of grass. In 2003 we sold our development rights on two hundred & fifty acres of our farm to be preserved for the future through the Farmland Preservation Program.

Two years ago the legislature, through the CIA, provided monetary relief to Connecticut dairy farms, at a time when the price we were receiving for our milk was only 50% of our cost to produce it. The legislature of our state will never realize how many farms were saved through this action. These funds provided a safety net when dairy prices were extremely depressed. The federal milk pricing formula does not take into account the higher costs of production, here in the northeast, especially in Connecticut. To date, the federal milk pricing formula has not yet made progress in addressing this inequity. We need to continue the safety net provided by HB 6262.

We need local products here in our state to stay HERE ! Dairy farms provide Connecticut with a working landscape, clean air from growing crops, a filter for our state's aquifers, and a place for hunters, fishermen and outdoor enthusiasts alike. This is hard to place a monetary value on! In addition, the dairy industry contributes over \$1 Billion to the state's economy along with many jobs.

We need HB 6262 to remove the Sunset Provision, to provide Dairy Farmers with the stability they need.

Thank you,

Ned Ellis
Mapleleaf Farm
768 Gilead St
Hebron, CT 06248